

LEONHARD FRANK

KARL AND ANNA

A THEATRE GUILD PLAY

Karl and Anna

THEATRE GUILD PLAYS

By George Bernard Shaw

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A THEATRE GUILD PLAY

Karl and Anna

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

BY

Leonhard Frank

TRANSLATED BY

Ruth Langner



New York · BRENTANO'S · MCMXXIX

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KARL AND ANNA was presented by The Theatre Guild for the first time in New York City on October 7, 1929, at the Guild Theatre, with the following cast:

CHARACTERS

Karl	} Germans taken pris- oner by the Russians	OTTO KRUGER
Richard		FRANK CONROY

Anna, Richard's wife ALICE BRADY

A Russian Guard CHARLES LEATHERBEE

Two German Prisoners of War
CLAUDE RAINS—PHILIP LEIGH

A Russian Supervisor of War-prisoners
HERBERT J. BIBERMAN

Marie RUTH HAMMOND

Marie's Sister GALE SONDERGAARD

Her Husband LARRY FLETCHER

ACT ONE

*A Russian prison camp on the border between
Europe and Asia. July, 1917.*

ACT TWO

Anna's kitchen living-room. July, 1918.

ACT THREE

Same as Act Two. November, 1918.

Act One

ACT ONE

SCENE: *Seen from the pit, the interior of a low windowless wooden shack. In the rear wall a broad door hanging crookedly on its hinges and opening into the room from the right. The room is shallow. Two field cots stand out from the right wall, parallel with the footlights. Left are two cots flat against the wall, one behind the other. In the middle of the ceiling hangs a kerosene lamp with a lead shade. In the left corner rear lean and hang all sorts of tools, such as shovels, picks, and axes. Through the open door we see the barbed wire fence, running at an angle into the distance, and the vanishing perspective of all we can glimpse of the prison camp, rosy with the final glow of summer sunset.*

A RUSSIAN GUARD. KARL, RICHARD, *in ragged German field uniforms. They both have similar builds although their faces are not alike: They are equally massive and have the dark coloring peculiar*

to metal workers. They look unkempt and wear full beards. RICHARD is slower and somewhat older, around forty.

The dialogue between KARL and RICHARD is delivered particularly slowly, with pauses between remark and reply, in consonance with the mood and entire situation of the first act. It is obvious that their concepts and their conversations have been circling continuously about the same set of circumstances for three years.

The GUARD, in Russian uniform, fixed bayonet, outside the camp proper, paces nearer along the barbed wire fence. Passes the door twice, then stops, calls into the distance. "Fsyauh spakvina Tavaristch." This is repeated twice at increasing distances through the camp. The GUARD comes center of the door, stops, leans his gun against the fence; fetches a short pipe and tobacco pouch out of his pocket, sticks the pipe into his mouth, tries to shake tobacco out of the pouch into the hollow of his hand, looks into the pouch, beats it against his hand: no results. KARL and RICHARD appear in the distance approaching inside the fence, pick and shovel slung over their shoulders. KARL touches his

cap with one finger in light greeting, fetches his pouch out of his pocket, and starts by indicating to the GUARD in pantomime that he wants to give him a pipeful of tobacco.

KARL

Tobacco, Tavaristch?

GUARD

Jesli ti dajosch, Tavaristch. Eff you . . . give, Tavaristch! [*Looks carefully about, then takes some.*]

KARL

[*Pours tobacco into his pouch, he gives sparingly.*]

GUARD

Spasibo. Spasibo. Spasibo.

KARL

Nitchevo. Nitchevo.

[KARL and RICHARD go to the door, enter the shack, and slowly come forward. KARL supports RICHARD, who limps painfully, takes his pick and rope, and lays them along with his own tools on the front bed, right. RICHARD sits down carefully on the foot of the cot, KARL sits down next to him,

quiet, calm, with the manner and facial expression of a man who has been repeating the same uninteresting routine for years.]

RICHARD

[Pulls his trouser leg up to the knee and unwinds a dirty bandage from around his calf.] One of that new batch of prisoners said . . .

KARL

That he was glad to be a prisoner, hey? They all say that in the beginning. But he'll open his eyes soon.

RICHARD

No, he says, this boy from Berlin says, that is: At home they don't smoke anything but potato-leaves now.

KARL

[Without raising his head.] What we smoked before the war wasn't much better.

RICHARD

This camp's getting damned crowded. Over a thousand, h'm? And nothing but our boys. . . . Wonder how long this dirty business is going to last? Almost three years, comrade, three years we've been stuck here.

KARL

[*Indifferent.*] If they hadn't caught us way back in . . . when was it?

RICHARD

Eh, September—

KARL

Yeh, September, 'Fourteen.

RICHARD

That's right.

KARL

We wouldn't be sitting here three years.

RICHARD

Is that a joke? Haven't you had enough?

KARL

I didn't mean it as a joke. Back home the swells are still smoking Havana cigars. Why should they worry about our eating turnips? I bet at this very minute they have closets full of cigars, twenty, thirty boxes at a time. They take one out for themselves after breakfast, understand, out of one of those broad, flat boxes. I can just see it.

RICHARD

[*Raises his bared leg, veined with blue on the*

calf, and carefully lifts it over the other knee.] I wish I could think of things the way you do.

KARL

Humph!

RICHARD

Every time you eat a turnip you just say to yourself, it's goose.

KARL

[Smiling to himself.] When I was three years old, I took one of my mother's hats—it was a bonnet with long ribbons to it—and I made myself a wagon out of it. I got between the two ribbons and pulled it through all the puddles in the back yard.

RICHARD

You're always making things up. Got a whipping, didn't you? *[Presses the swellings on his leg gingerly with his fingertips.]* This keeps right on swelling. It's awful, I tell you. *[Puts the leg carefully back on the floor. Pulls down his trouser.]* If this turns into blood-poisoning, they'll chop me right off at the hip without waiting. *[GUARD passes. He calls and the call is repeated twice in the distance. A pause.]* And when my Anna got up

mornings—you know, I always lay on the wall side of the bed, and my wife was on the outside—I never noticed it. So quiet. Real quiet, you know.

KARL

I've heard that before, too.—Yes and you'd never wake up till the gas burner began to whistle.

RICHARD

Yes, always the same sound. I always meant to fix it. But then we had to go.

KARL

[*Earnestly whistles one long, monotonous tone.*]
Like that, wasn't it? [*He whistles again.*]

RICHARD

[*Yawning.*] Yes, just like that. Wonder if it still whistles like that?

[*GUARD passes several times. KARL is stretched out on his cot.*]

KARL

Wonder how it comes that her breast is so white and the hips and the stomach much darker? [*RICHARD is silent.*] Like bronze, you say. I always have to think about that.

RICHARD

When you've got her, you can't think of anything . . . But that's three years now . . . Lots of times I don't know what Anna looks like any more. I don't see her face any more. Can't see it! It all gets . . . foggy, you know.

KARL

[*Powerfully imagining, and fascinated by his inner vision.*] I know just what she looks like. Exactly. Everything. . . . And what she's like, too. Everything.

RICHARD

You've never seen her.

KARL

[*Quickly, and with the same absorbed look.*] Last night again. Dreaming. I'd escaped and gone to her. [*Jumps up, gestures toward the center wall with both hands.*] This is where your bed is, isn't it?

RICHARD

Our mattress is in three sections.

KARL

I know . . . Here's the iron stove, and the coal box and the poker with the brass handle.

RICHARD

Uh-huh!

KARL

[*Gestures with both hands to the right front corner.*] And this is where your sofa kind of sticks out into the room.

RICHARD

The stove? . . . Isn't that . . . [*Looks toward the left wall.*]

KARL

[*Casual.*] No, here.

RICHARD

You're right. . . . You've never seen my place and you know your way around better than I do.

KARL

[*Bending over an imaginary bed.*] And here's where Anna stood and smoothed the cover flat. . . . Her dress was faded near the hip. I saw it, just as plain as . . . in my dream last night. . . . It looked so beautiful, I can't tell you. . . . Can't tell you how beautiful it was.

RICHARD

That's right, the sun had taken out some of the

color, there. She doesn't wear anything but cotton wash-dresses.

KARL

[*Looking out into space.*] And then she turned and I saw her face. She looked at me.

RICHARD

If I had that airship that flew over the camp today, I'd get to her pretty quick even if she is far away. I can't stand it, I tell you. Three years!

KARL

[*Comes slowly front and sits down next to RICHARD.*] At least you have somebody thinking of you.

RICHARD

That's right.

[*Rear, TWO SOLDIERS carry a steaming soup-cauldron, hung on a pole, along the fence.*]

KARL

Someone that belongs to you. But me—nobody! You keep trying to forget it—but it's no use. You're only a worm that's supposed to take a hundred thousand mile trip over burning sand—sand, I tell you, not earth.

RICHARD

All right—I know.

KARL

You're so alone you even envy rats. With you, of course, with you, with you, that's different.

RICHARD

Yes, Anna's waiting for me. . . . If she hasn't gone to the dogs.

KARL

[*Turns on RICHARD.*] She hasn't gone to the dogs. Anna hasn't. [*Turns his face away once more, lets his head slowly droop.*]

RICHARD

They say plenty of them have starved to death. It isn't only in the army that people die of hunger.

KARL

Listen, Richard, listen, if she were here now, your wife, listen—

RICHARD

Yeh—I'm listenin'.

KARL

Would you let me have her just once?

RICHARD

[*Who can't quite grasp it, after a pause.*] If she were here now?

[*A sound of confirmation from KARL.*]

RICHARD

Yes, I know.—Well, maybe once—maybe. But the second time I'd split your head with an axe.

[*Pause—then two youthful PRISONERS of War enter, carrying steaming bowls of soup and sit down on the first cot left. As the prisoners enter, RICHARD to KARL—*“Here comes another one”*KARL and PRISONER TWO exchange greetings.*]

PRISONER ONE

[*In a fresh voice, Berlin dialect.*] I dunno . . . after them trenches . . . this is a boodwar.

PRISONER TWO

Wait till the supervisor dusts you off every day for three years like he has us, in this boudoir, and you'll change your mind. In the trenches, of course, you can get shot, too. But last week they shot thirty-six of the men—from Barrack C.—just like that. That's our barracks, you know. Just like that—thirty-six men. And d'you know what for?

RICHARD

[*To KARL.*] And Anna, if she did anything like that . . . I'd . . . I'd . . . No, I couldn't stand that.

[*During the following Scene the NEWCOMERS eat their soup slowly and without appetite.*]

TWO

Just because they didn't come to evening roll-call.

ONE

Say, that's a terrible crime against discipline, comrade.

TWO

Aha, so you're one of those. [*He mimics a thumb to nose salute.*]

ONE

Well it is a terrible crime against discipline, ain't it, all over the world.

TWO

Prisoners didn't come to roll-call. They locked themselves into barracks. And that was just on account of the supervisor. That pig comes to inspect barracks every evening before roll-call. He

puts things in order, so to speak. And if he finds a flea on your bed . . . and he always finds a flea or something . . . then two of the fellows have to strap you to the cot and beat you green and blue, and if they don't do it right, then they get strapped down themselves.

ONE

Our armies in the field have the same thing only worse. If anybody eats up some little trifle the fellows have to tie him to a tree top, like the Crucified, so his feet don't touch the ground, you see, and his eyes fall out of his head . . . and—

TWO

[*Gestures for him to stop—goes to door.*] I know, I know . . . [GUARD *passes and calls. The call is repeated.*] Thirty-six of them against the wall. It didn't last five minutes. Just like that. . . . [To KARL and RICHARD—*trying to get free of his horrible thoughts.*] What's the matter with you fellows? Ain't you hungry?

[KARL and RICHARD *tear themselves away from their brooding, reach resignedly for their empty bowls and start for the door.*]

RICHARD

[*Limps badly, can hardly go on, stops, goes on.*]
I tell you, Karl, if they don't operate my leg's done for.

KARL

Well we've got to eat anyway.

[*Both off.*]

TWO

[*Calls after the others.*] Don't work up too much of an appetite, you can't swallow it. [*To PRISONER ONE.*] He won't let him go to the doctor. He won't let him go. The Supervisor has a special place in his heart for that one. He's been riding him for three years from reveille to taps. Because no matter how swinish he is that one won't let out a sound. The Supervisor can't stand that. That hog wants to see our rage and watch us choke it down again like vomit. . . . But that Richard, he's like a trunk. One of these trunks you can always cram more into. . . . Ugh, can't get this stuff down. [*Hurls the full bowl into the middle of the floor, full of rage and loathing.*] But our protest is posted now.

ONE

Where did you paste it up?

TWO

Just the right place: the Commandant's door.

ONE

Then we'll sure get roast pheasant from tomorrow on. Who put that bright idea over?

TWO

We cast lots. If you'd been here yesterday you could have cast, too. But nobody knows who drew it. That way nobody can give him away. That's logical enough, ain't it? We said to ourselves, "If the comrade that pasted up the protest gets nabbed, he's dead ten minutes after." That's logic, ain't it? . . . Under our protest it says: One for All.

ONE

One for All? If they popped off thirty-six men last week, tomorrow maybe they'll say, "All for one?"

TWO

They can't shoot all of us. Who'd do the work? That's logic, ain't it?

[*The RUSSIAN GUARD rushes in—pushing the*

two prisoners out, his bellowing as intense as his physical force.]

GUARD

Nooh shtauh takoy? Oohjgeh siem Chasof. Na rabohtooh. Jgiva!

[KARL and RICHARD enter with their steaming bowls of food, the GUARD turns on them.]

GUARD

Vee tohjgeh brahtsee, nah rabotooh.

KARL

[Stuttering his Russian.] Veedichtieh—pahjgaulistah—Tavarish—ohn bolyen.

GUARD

Nah rahbotooh! Nah rahbotooh! Work to do! Work to do!

KARL

[Pointing to RICHARD's leg.] Ohn bolyen. Ohn bolyen. Look! His leg! He can't work. *[Gives him more tobacco.]*

GUARD

Ladno, Ladno. Nooh ahstavaitez. *[He goes.]*

RICHARD

[Slowly limping forward.] Suppose I sent the camp doctor a letter.

GUARD

[*Heard calling from outside.*] Tak snahtchit rahbohtooh? Jgiva! Jgiva!

RICHARD

Maybe that one out there— [*Sits down on his former seat on the cot and begins to eat.* KARL *lights the kerosene lamp.*]

KARL

That guard is a decent fellow all right, but he can't get that to the doctor without some one knowing. Tell the Supervisor again or go straight to the doctor, yourself.

RICHARD

Yes, and he'll smash his fist into my face, and I'll just have to stand there. In that hog's barracks, there aren't supposed to be any sick. Everything's always absolutely in order. . . . That protest against the stinking food is another fool thing. That'll only cost more blood. We are prisoners of war. That means: shut up and wait to be kicked.

KARL

[*Sits down next to RICHARD as before.*] You've got a lot more kicks coming to you.

RICHARD

[*Unruffled.*] I tell myself that's our fate. . . . If they can't grab the comrade that pasted up the protest . . . and they're not going to look long, either—then they'll just pick out one man, or two for good measure, and shoot them. That's clear. To put the fear of God into us, they'll say. In ten minutes, I tell you, in ten minutes they'll shoot and whoever is hit—is hit.

KARL

Let 'em shoot. [*He eats.*]

RICHARD

[*Spitting out a mouthful of soup.*] Swill! But my Anna wouldn't do what you said—even if I was to leave her with you. She isn't just anybody's woman, honest, she isn't.

KARL

Suppose she's taken up with some one else meantime? Three years is a long time for a woman with blood in her. . . . Maybe you wouldn't be such a slouch yourself if these beds were full of women instead of just fleas.

RICHARD

Now I'm going to tell you something maybe you don't know, Karl.

KARL

That isn't likely.

RICHARD

Huh! Anna and me, we moved over to Berlin, and we got hold of this nice kitchen living-room and fixed it up with bargain furniture.

KARL

I know all that. . . . Six monthly payments. Only the sofa cover, the one with the ring pattern, you paid cash for. . . . A blue and yellow pattern.

RICHARD

And then the war came along.

KARL

[*Pushes aside coat and shirt at the breast.*] Anna—her mole, here isn't it, right here?

RICHARD

Yes. [*Points to the inside of his thigh.*] And one here. It's a little bigger than the other.

KARL

And fawn color, you say.

RICHARD

That's because her skin's so white. . . .

[*Pause. GUARD passes.*]

RICHARD

But before we knew—about my going to war—we said to each other: Now we've got to hang on to our home. And six days later I had to go. I just bet Anna hasn't forgotten to hang on. She won't have time to think of other things. It'll be hard enough for her just to keep things going.

KARL

Maybe that's just it. Maybe it got too hard for her. [*In fear and jealousy.*] And besides, Richard, three years, think of it, three years. I've had people tell me that it's hardest for women with these white skins and beauty marks to hold on to themselves.

RICHARD

What's it to you anyway. You keep a clean tongue in your head. But Anna . . . haven't I told you that, that was never easy for her. She was

twenty-four then. That's not so young for a healthy woman. And even later. It was always a struggle for her. Every time— No, no, she isn't that sort.

KARL

[*His face distorted as if with suppressed agony.*] Why do you tell me all that?

RICHARD

[*Completely under the sway of his imagination.*] But then—when it comes to it—then, well, she's all right. Then she's a woman all right. God!!!

KARL

[*Beside himself with envy and torment.*] Shut up, can't you! I know, I know.

RICHARD

Have I told you that before?

KARL

[*Tender.*] I know everything about her. [RICHARD grunts sarcastically.] Much more than you've told me or than you could tell me. [*After a pause.*] Do you like her? I mean, do you like her?

RICHARD

God! You've got no idea. And Anna—she likes

me a lot. Because I'm her husband. That's how Anna is. She's a sensible woman.

KARL

I see her. Now I see her again. She's standing in a path with trees. It's toward evening. Not a soul. Only her. She's waiting . . . that's the only way, I can say it. She's waiting. In a path with trees not far from the house.

RICHARD

There aren't any trees in our neighborhood. . . . Yes, there are too . . . a little farther out there's a street with trees. . . . You been there?

KARL

I've never been there.

RICHARD

How do you know there's a street with trees near us, then? Who told you? I couldn't have told you. I'd forgotten it myself.

KARL

How do I know? I don't know.

RICHARD

She used to sit on a bench under the trees in the sun. I remember.

KARL

She isn't sitting on the bench. She's standing under the trees. She's waiting. It's so beautiful, I don't know how to say it.

RICHARD

You bet Anna's waiting. Waiting for me. . . . Three years, my boy, three years.

KARL

If you always used to go without a beard before and you come back after all these years with a full beard maybe she won't know you right off.

RICHARD

[*Teasing, happy.*] Then all I have to do is remind her of things, the kind of things only a husband knows about his wife. Then she'll know right off it's me. There's lots of funny little things about her—just before— Did I tell you the way she lies—when—well, then—then she lies—

KARL

[*Tortured.*] Stop, will you, stop! You've told me that before, too.

[*Outside in the camp darkness has almost fallen.*

We see the GUARD's pipe glow for a moment from time to time.]

[The SUPERVISOR OF PRISONERS' VOICE is heard—bellowing.]

SUPERVISOR'S VOICE

Tee smayish tahk samnoi gavarit? Ya nitchevo nieh bavtarayeyow dva rahza.

RICHARD

Here comes that louse to look for fleas.

KARL

I wouldn't put it past him to bring some himself.

[SUPERVISOR comes along fence by door—stops short as he sees GUARD smoking—rushes to him.]

SUPERVISOR

Hktau skazal shtau tee mohjish kooreet sdyes. *[Knocks pipe from his hand.]* Svolyatch! Tiehbiah oohbeet bee nahdoh. Esschau rahz, slooshish? *[He punches the GUARD in the face violently, then strides into the shack.]* Protiest! Hktau napeesal? Hktau veeviezel? Who pasted it up? *[KARL stands rigid, silent. RICHARD tries to rise, falls back, groaning. Silent.]* Who pasted it up? You will—

tell me—when—standing against the wall, you dogs. But then, will be too late. [*To RICHARD.*] Voht shtau! Svolyatch! Not standing? Not standing, you dog?

[*RICHARD rises, very painfully.*]

KARL

He must be operated.

SUPERVISOR

[*Bellows with rage.*] Smirnah! [*Knocks the bowl of food out of RICHARD's hand and points.*] Lap it up, you dog. [*RICHARD stares at him with rage—he can hardly control.*] If you don't lap that up . . . in half a minute, . . . you hear me, . . . in half a minute . . .

[*RICHARD, watching him raise the covers to look for fleas, is suddenly beside himself with rage, tears the axe off the bed, limps quickly to the SUPERVISOR and stands over him with the axe raised.*]

[*KARL springs at RICHARD the same moment, like a flash, snatches the axe, knocking against RICHARD's wounded leg so that he cries out with pain and falls down unconscious.*]

[*The SUPERVISOR turns at the same moment, stares at KARL, and the raised axe, jumps for the door to escape death.*]

SUPERVISOR

[*Bellows.*] Chsavoy! Chsavoy! Kapitan strah-jgee! Pahdee soodah! Jgiva! [*He snatches out his revolver, points it at KARL, who has let the axe sink and fall. Two GUARDS rush in with bayonets fixed. SUPERVISOR points to KARL.*] Arrest. . . . [*The GUARDS run forward, take KARL center. The SUPERVISOR comes slowly forward, crouching, triumphant in his sense of power and revenge.*] So, you wanted to kill me . . . did you? . . . [*KARL wooden, silent.*] Answer me, you dog. [*KARL silent, the SUPERVISOR spits in his face. KARL silent.*] You pasted up that paper, didn't you? So you're the one. That's enough for two death sentences. Too bad after we shoot you, . . . we cannot make you again alive . . . so we could kill you again. [*Smiling.*] Too bad. But we'll try not to make it too quick for you. We know of a method, my fine fellow, a method . . . [*Looks down at RICHARD lying unconscious on the floor.*] And your friend . . . yes—then we'll o-per-ate on him. Then we're

rid of both of you. [*Suddenly he whirls KARL around on one heel, punches him on the neck.*] To the wall! [*KARL stumbles, between the two GUARDS. The SUPERVISOR calls to them, pointing to RICHARD, still unconscious.*] Eeh pohtohm—dahnieceetieh mehnieh soodah! [*The GUARDS turn questioningly, stand still—SUPERVISOR turns on RICHARD.*] Yes—then come back for this one. [*He kicks his sore leg.*] To do his o-per-a-tion.

[*KARL leaps away knocking the SECOND GUARD over—*]

SECOND GUARD

[*Screaming.*] Niehmiehtz oohbehjgal!

SUPERVISOR

[*Crazy with fury.*] Niehmiehtz oohbehjgal? [*Rushes out, SECOND GUARD after him, bellowing.*] Niehmiehtz oohbehjgal! Kapitan strahjgee!

[*The FIRST GUARD, the one to whom KARL gave tobacco, immediately the others have run out raises his gun to fire at the escaping KARL—but as the others go—he points it straight overhead and fires twice. Shouts are heard in the turmoil and confusion in the camp.*]

CURTAIN

Act Two

ACT TWO

SCENE: *Takes place a year later in July 1918, in ANNA's kitchen living-room, a fairly small, square room. In the rear wall a rather low, but broad window with blooming plants in it. Rear, by the window right, a broad bed with a night table and a little lamp. Opposite, somewhat more toward the middle of the wall, a narrow chest, next to it a small chest-like kitchen closet with a gas ring on it, above it, the plate-rack. In front of the stove at an angle into the room, a sofa. In the center, a little table with three chairs. Over it, an electric light bulb softened by a shade with a bit of material over it. Right, near the footlights, the entrance door, next to it, a chair flanked by the little iron stove.*

ANNA, *twenty-eight, unspoiled wisdom in her face, sage moderation and inner riches in her level gaze, might serve nature as the pattern for women with warmth, strength, and unspoiled tempera-*

ments. She wears her long red-blond hair in a knot at the nape of her neck.

MARIE, *twenty-four, wears her dark hair bobbed. The dimples in the tight smoothness of her cheeks come and vanish in continually vital charm, as the little mouth may direct: a girl who is fundamentally gay, sustained by gaiety, easily excited, quickly and violently overwhelmed by events, but as quickly on the crest again.*

MARIE is sitting on the raised head of the sofa, pulling basting thread out of a step-in, she has just finished. ANNA sits next to her, smiling like a woman absorbed in the pleasure of a young girl's simple, warm love of life.

MARIE

[Points back to the window, left.] Anna, I do think it would look better near the window.

ANNA

Think so?

MARIE

Come! [They carry the ottoman to the window, left.] You'll see!

ANNA

It's been standing there for four years now.

MARIE

Isn't it much better like this?

ANNA

Maybe it is.

MARIE

Of course! [*Sits on the head-piece again.*]
How it changes the room! The whole kitchen looks
different, Anna.

ANNA

[*Perches fleetingly on the foot-end of the sofa.*]
And now I'll put it back.

MARIE

Yes, that's just like you. Everything's to stay
like it was forever. You're like that about every-
thing.

ANNA

And isn't it better that way? . . . No one can
ever really change things.

MARIE

Honest, Anna, tell me, Anna . . .

ANNA

What?

MARIE

Why didn't you and Richard ever have a child? Honest, didn't you want one? If you only had one, now.

ANNA

You can't talk about that sort of thing—it's a sort of a feeling, why I didn't want his child.

MARIE

He was so good to you. I simply can't forget it. . . . But that time, that Sunday, on the picnic—how long ago that is—that time, you know, I had the feeling for just a few minutes that maybe he meant me.

ANNA

That was the same night that he asked me if I wanted to be his wife. But I knew long before that.

MARIE

Wonderful, that's what it must be, Anna, wonderful. . . . Such a man. A regular man!

ANNA

[*With a wifely smile.*] You liked him a lot, Marie, didn't you?

MARIE

[*In mock indignation.*] Go along . . . What are you thinking of! [*Overcomes her sadness and plunges up into real gaiety.*] The way he danced with you those days. Just like an elephant, and a happy one, too. He couldn't really dance at all. But I never saw anybody so happy. His face! I can see it in front of me, now. [*Holds up the finished step-in for herself and ANNA to inspect.*] Pretty? —isn't it? Shall I?

ANNA

[*Smiling.*] Go on, slip into it.

MARIE

[*Flashes out of her dress, slips into the step-in, and mounts the head of the couch to pirouette and preen in her new step-in which is tied high-waisted.*] It's like me buying this instead of food. My bread-cards are still downstairs in the bureau-drawer. And I hadn't a cent left. I'm a fool, ain't I?

ANNA

[*With a womanly smile.*] No, you're not.

MARIE

On Sunday, I was in the museum. I went there

because it was cool. And I saw a big picture, "The Last Supper." In the middle was Jesus, and every Apostle had two rolls in front of him.

ANNA

Two? Imagine that.

MARIE

Honest, Anna. [*Turns and twists in the step-in.*] I tell you I'd like to have two more of these. That would make a quarter of a dozen. It is pretty, isn't it?

ANNA

Lovely.

MARIE

Oh, Anna, listen to me complaining when there's my sister with her two little boys and not a penny in the house.

ANNA

And she sits there sewing epaulets all day long.

MARIE

If Hans wasn't there, she'd starve to death. [*After a pause.*] But now that he's there, I'm afraid, Anna, honest I'm afraid. If that train pulls

in on time my brother-in-law will get here in a quarter of an hour. Since my sister had that telegram that he's coming, she sits there like dead, with Hans' little baby on her lap, staring in front of her, she's been like that all day. [*Slips into her dress.*]

ANNA

It's awful it turned out this way.

MARIE

It's more than a year since my brother-in-law was here on leave. . . . His bed was empty. How could she leave it like that? When she didn't have anything! So she rented Franz's bed to Hans. At first the table stood between the two beds, to mark the frontier. Then they pulled out the table and shoved the beds together. That's the way it all happened—without their knowing it. And Hans feeds the family almost by himself. And he's so crazy about his child! Look, like this, [*leans her head on both hands and makes coddling noises as if to a baby*] this is the way he sits by the wash-basket and looks at it for hours on end. Just crazy about it.—What's going to happen? I've got to go to the office. Night duty. [*Rises and goes.*]

ANNA

Marie!

MARIE

Yes.

ANNA

Well, send your sister over to me. I don't think she should be alone with her husband, the first few minutes.

MARIE

I guess you're right, Anna.

ANNA

That postman two doors down pulled out his revolver the first thing when he came home on leave. Maybe if some one else had been there with them . . .

MARIE

But when Mrs. Moser's husband came home, Wilhelm just moved out for a while, and they'd been living together, too. That's the right way to do things.

ANNA

[*Musing, more to herself.*] And the postman's

wife didn't even know that her husband was coming back on leave—

MARIE

And Mr. Hauser. The other man still lives there because he can't find a room. The three of them are living together in their kitchen living-room.

ANNA

Mr. Shauer beat his wife nearly to death. And now they've separated. You take the matter too lightly, Marie. These men have been out in that misery for years and if they come back to this, well, it's too much. That's the way you must look at it. You can see that.

MARIE

Uh-huh! What do you think my brother-in-law'll do, what do you think he'll do, Anna, when he sees Hans' child?

ANNA

It is hard. What should he do. He's her husband. Every man doesn't walk in and shoot his wife. Don't you worry, Marie.

MARIE

[*Already in the doorway.*] I'm . . . I'm to blame too for all this.

ANNA

What?

MARIE

She talked it all over with me at the beginning and I didn't talk her out of it. The other way around, really, because I understood. I understood all right. He's fond of her. . . . And now I'm scared. But it's the way things are, my brother-in-law must think of that, things are to blame too. . . . But maybe he'll understand. He's got to understand. [*Suddenly gay again.*] I'll make pancakes for him. Wonderful pancakes. He's fond of them. Then he won't be able to say anything—you'll see.

ANNA

Marie, you better send her over to me.

MARIE

All right, Anna. All right. [*Off.*]

[ANNA goes to the gas ring, pours farina into the pot, standing on the wheezing flame, stirs.]

KARL

[*With a dripping bundle, wrapped in newspaper and fastened by a strap, enters, and remains stand-*

ing in the doorway, tremendous tension in bearing and look, which turns into emotion and joy as he evidently finds that the real ANNA corresponds to his image of her. She feels the presence of some one and turns.] Anna! [ANNA, frightened, looks at KARL, mutely questioning. He is ardently happy.] Anna . . . Anna . . . do you recognize me?

ANNA

[Freed from fear by his joy. Curious.] Who are you?

KARL

[Lays his bundle on the night table.] The gas still whistles. I always meant to fix it— The very day before, and then we had to go. [ANNA is confused. She turns off the gas without ceasing to look at KARL. The monotonous whistle ends.] Do you remember?

ANNA

[Greatly bewildered.] He did . . . yes, we did talk about that.

KARL

So you didn't know me?

ANNA

Who are you anyway?

KARL

[*After a pause, his lips trembling with excitement.*] Richard.

ANNA

[*Takes one step nearer, her hand pressing on the table.*] Richard? No, you're not Richard.

KARL

[*Pleading.*] Anna! [*Deeply moved, assertive.*] Come, Anna, don't you believe me? . . . And I'd have known you way down the street even in a crowd. Can't tell you how I've wanted you. [*Moves to the chairs at the table, happy in recognizing them.*] I'll have to soap down these chairs and put on some fresh paint. . . . I told you that paint wouldn't last. [ANNA *stares at him, wide-eyed, listening tensely.*] There was a pot of oil-paint, too. . . . Is it here still?

ANNA

Yes, it's still here.

KARL

But I bet it's dried up. Four years! Well, Anna, my Anna!

ANNA

But you aren't my husband! Why, my husband is . . . [*Runs to the table drawer, rummages for something, comes to him with a military notice, hands it to him.*] So long now. Four years. Why, my husband has been dead four years.

KARL

[*First looks at ANNA with a burningly happy smile, not reading the card, shakes his head gently, reads.*] "Fallen September fourth, 1914. [*Turns the card over.*] Division Headquarters." [*Turns the card over, repeats.*] Fallen September fourth, 1914. [*Looks up, raises both hands, smiling.*] It's all wrong—it's all wrong. They made a mistake, that's all. [*Takes a step toward ANNA, takes her hand as he gives her the card. With a deep tenderness.*] What a thing to write you.

ANNA

[*In her face the mad hope of a woman, who, shortly after her mate dies, can believe that her beloved will walk into the room as usual.*] Not dead?

KARL

It's true. Maybe I'm still a little strange to you.

Four years make a big difference—four years of war.

ANNA

[*Moved by the reality of his feeling, folds her hands on her breast.*] Yes, you are a stranger, and yet I seem to know you. Have we . . . ? Maybe we've met somewhere. [*Lets both hands fall, so that they are extended out from her waist.*]

KARL

There . . . that's the way I saw you. You were waiting—under the trees. You were waiting for me. It was towards evening. Just you! You were standing very still. It was as if you knew that I was coming.

ANNA

When was that?

KARL

[*Softly smiling.*] I was in the prison camp, then. Out there in Russia. Do you believe me now?

ANNA

Yes. But why do you say that you're my husband? In God's name, why do you say that? He's dead. My husband is dead. He's dead.

KARL

[*Pleading.*] But, Anna! [*Calmly.*] You were lucky. A man sometimes does come back even when they say he's dead. [*Takes her hand again.*] You're lucky. [*Joyous.*] Anna, we're lucky.

ANNA

[*Touched by hope, starts to withdraw her hand, then leaves it in his.*] Things like that don't happen.

KARL

But don't you care, Anna, don't you care at all?

ANNA

[*Takes back her hand, but he holds it.*] But it isn't possible.

KARL

[*With true, deep love.*] And all I saw in the world those four years was you. . . . You are my Anna, my wife.

[*Both slowly turn their faces toward the door. MARIE'S SISTER, in felt slippers, her baby in her arms, enters slowly, without speaking, rigid, as if felled by fate.*]

ANNA

[*In suppressed excitement, looks confusedly at KARL.*] Maybe you're hungry. Here, sit down here. [*Brings an apple, plate, knife and fork, sausage.*] Do you want me to peel it for you?

KARL

You remember that, too? [*ANNA droops her head, confused, peels.*] There you are peeling the apple. [*ANNA looks up, sees that KARL is moved.*] There you are.

[*MARIE'S SISTER quiets her baby and sits on the bed.*]

KARL

[*Sits down, looks at the fork.*] Isn't the old fork here any more? The one with the three prongs—one prong is shorter!

[*ANNA, overwhelmed. Goes to the kitchen closet as if in a dream, brings the fork.*]

KARL

[*Happy.*] There it is. . . . They used to have at least two hundred pairs of shoes in the shoemaker's window downstairs. I remember it exactly. But now, now there's only one pair of old boots and a

broken flower-vase in the window. You only have to think what that window used to look like and what it looks like now and you know enough. That's the war.

[*Heavy MAN's tread approaches on the stairs. Voices of the people in the tenement are heard—shouting the name of FRANZ, and welcoming him home.*]

HUSBAND

[*In the doorway, joyous.*] Two weeks' leave, Mrs. Anna! Marie said she . . . Where is she anyhow? [*Enters. His searching eyes find his wife. Joy ebbs in his face. He stares at her, meanwhile slipping off the rifle he has strapped over his shoulder out of habit. Rifle off, he leans it against the wall. He understands that this baby, since his wife is nursing it, must be hers. Takes two heavy steps toward her.*] What . . . what's this? [*The WOMAN looks at her husband, defenceless, silent. He looks at ANNA, who looks back, breathless, at KARL, who does not know what is going on; looks at his wife again.*] Wha . . . what?

WIFE

It's Hans' baby. [*The HUSBAND now knows*

everything, stares, chokes, turns slowly, heavily to the door, hangs his rifle over his shoulder automatically, and goes wordlessly. His WIFE jumps up, deathly fear in her face, leaps for the door, screams.] Franz! Franz! Stay! [Off into the hall, the frightened voices of the people in the tenement rise again.] Stay! . . . Frank!

[ANNA goes to the door, locks it.]

KARL

Now, I understand. . . .

ANNA

Poor woman! . . . And her husband. Her husband!

KARL

They're all different. One man will murder his wife and the lover into the bargain, another man doesn't care at all, but he . . . I don't think much more can happen to him. But you, Anna, during all those years. Now I'm sure that you—

ANNA

[Turns abruptly to him, stares at him.] If you say you're my husband again, you hear me, just once more . . . *[Tears of anger are in her eyes.]*

KARL

But . . . you felt it yourself—just now. Didn't

you? We belong to each other, you and me. You felt it, yourself!

ANNA

No we don't. You're lying. I never saw you before.

KARL

It's a whole year, . . . I escaped in July 1917 . . . it took me a whole year to come to you. And all that time it was you—only you!

ANNA

[*Goes to stove as if to work, turns to KARL gesturing wildly about her.*] That's what they all do. They all have an excuse. It happens around here every day.

KARL

But we're different, Anna. And you know it. . . . [*Turns his head slowly toward the window.*] New window-curtains? We bought yellow ones that time. The man in the store said, "these are a bargain." . . . Do you remember?

ANNA

[*In stirring drops the spoon—grows faint.*] I remember. Oh, God!

KARL

The man that told us how good the curtains were that time, he had a little short black moustache—like this—and a scar on his forehead. I pointed it out to you that day.

ANNA

[*Highly excited, beside herself.*] How do you know these things? What you're doing is horrible. Horrible! [*Her hand inadvertently touches the military death announcement postal on the table.*]

KARL

[*Stares at ANNA in the depths of need and despair, lets his head droop.*] No, no, you're my Anna, my wife.

ANNA

[*Crumpling the card, tense.*] Maybe my husband is really alive. And still you want me for your wife? Maybe he's living and he'll come back.

KARL

[*Jerks his head up.*] Well, suppose he does? Suppose a man does come. If a man came! What do you think? [*Suddenly wild, teeth bared, low.*] Let them come. Nobody can. We belong to each

other. [*Sees ANNA's fear— Gently.*] It's fate, Anna, there is such a thing.

ANNA

But you are . . . no—you're not a stranger. Even if I don't understand. Maybe it wouldn't be so difficult—so terribly difficult to understand—if only you didn't say you were my husband.

KARL

But you do understand. Don't you see, Anna, it's got to be this way.

ANNA

But suppose he's still alive—my husband? [*With a terrible uncertainty, because her feeling for KARL is already stronger than her logic.*] No, we mustn't . . . it's not possible. You can't simply give up your husband, for another man. It isn't as easy as that. I only need to think of him, of his eyes, the way he looks at you. . . . He likes me a lot in his own way—a whole lot.

KARL

You were waiting for me. And you know it.

ANNA

But he was so good to me. So good, Richard was

. . . why he was different from you, clumsier. He was slow and gentle, not rough like you . . . you frighten me.

[Hurried steps outside, a knock. ANNA goes to the door and opens for MARIE, who stands in the doorway, crying, terribly excited.]

MARIE

Anna! Anna! He went straight to the station and back to the army. That's the way he took it, Anna. That's the way he took it. . . . But he'll come back. He'll surely come back, Anna. I'll throw my arms around his neck the day he comes back. *[Hugs ANNA.]* And I'll kiss him. And then everything'll be all right again.

ANNA

He's sure to come back.

MARIE

[Already quieted.] He will, won't he?

ANNA

Of course he'll come. . . . *[She looks at KARL, stops short.]* . . . back.

KARL

[Not surprised, rises, holds out his hand to

MARIE— *With quiet happiness.*] Good evening, Miss Marie . . . you've hardly changed, you really haven't changed at all in four years. Only your hair . . . you've cut your hair.

[MARIE *looks questioningly from ANNA to KARL and again at ANNA.*]

KARL

[*Calmly, smiling, to ANNA.*] She doesn't recognize me.

MARIE

[*Smiles expectantly at ANNA.*] Who is he?

KARL

Your hair came down twice, the day of the picnic. Anna lent you one of her hairpins.

MARIE

[*To ANNA.*] Go on, tell me.

ANNA

[*With an impenetrable face and without emphasis.*] Richard.

MARIE

[*Surprised, still smiling.*] Richard? What?

ANNA

[*Adamant, unemphatic.*] Yes. He just came.

[KARL *looks and smiles quietly like an interested bystander.*]

MARIE

[*Starts back, at a loss.*] How can you joke, about Richard, when he's . . . dead.

ANNA

No, he wasn't killed.

KARL

[*Sincere.*] No one's joking, Miss Marie.

MARIE

[*To ANNA, hurt.*] Why do you do this, Anna, when you know how upset I am?

KARL

But, Marie, why don't you believe it?

MARIE

I'd know, even if you . . . I mean, even if Richard had changed ever so much in these four years, I'd feel if Richard was standing in front of me.

KARL

[*Calm and sure.*] Anna believes me. She feels it.

MARIE

[*To ANNA, uneasily.*] Do you believe he's Richard?

ANNA

[*Unemphatic.*] You heard.

MARIE

[*Much taken aback.*] He says that he's Richard!
[*MARIE is firm and resolved. To KARL.*] How can you say that!

KARL

It is the truth.

MARIE

[*To KARL, excited.*] It's a lie. You're lying.
You know you are lying.

KARL

[*Shakes his head slowly. With deep conviction.*]
No, no.

ANNA

[*At the same time. Fending MARIE off as if afraid of losing KARL.*] How can you say that, Marie, talking like that. You mustn't.

MARIE

[*Taken aback.*] Anna!

ANNA

He thinks that if you feel things, they must be true.

MARIE

Why, Anna. That's just it. That's just why! You must feel it. Even if I were blind . . .

ANNA

[*Matter-of-fact.*] Perhaps it would be the same for me, the same for me, even if I were blind.

MARIE

[*Begins to understand and looks at her, astounded, and starts backing toward the door.*] Don't be angry at me, Anna, don't be angry at me.

ANNA

[*Gently.*] I'm not angry. Don't talk about it. Not yet. Not to anybody.

MARIE

[*Upset.*] No, no. [*Looks wide-eyed at KARL, looks at ANNA, goes out.*]

ANNA

[*Closes the door, slowly returns, mistress of herself.*] Now don't think that I . . . It isn't so at all.

KARL

What you feel can't be a lie. You said it yourself.

ANNA

[*Stern.*] She knew very well that you were lying.

KARL

[*Gently.*] And you, Anna, and you?

ANNA

It's stupid for you to say you're my husband. Stupid to say it.

KARL

But the way I mean it, you think, don't you, the way I mean it, isn't a lie. You called me Richard.

ANNA

[*Beside herself.*] But I never said Richard to you—not once. [*Changes the subject.*] Marie's brother-in-law took the train back. That's what's going to happen. That's what's going to happen!

KARL

I wouldn't have done that if I'd been him. I'd have ended everything right there. There wouldn't be anything else left for me. Because I . . . be-

cause there's got to be two of us who are everything to each other. That's what life is. There's no other meaning to it. [*Pause—he gets a cup of water for her.*] I'll look for a job on Monday. Are you still working at the box factory?

ANNA

Yes, I'm still there. [*She takes a drink.*]

KARL

You won't need to stay there now. Is there much left to pay on the furniture?

ANNA

No, it's all paid. [*Puts cup down—KARL drinks from same spot. She sees him. Pause. He rises slowly, goes around looking at the room.*]

KARL

The sofa used to be over by the stove.

ANNA

We can put it back again.

[*They carry the sofa back.*]

KARL

Sticking out into the room . . . so. . . . Now everything's the way it used to be.

ANNA

You walk into my room and tell me all these things so I almost have to believe them; you even say things I've almost forgotten myself.

KARL

I know all about you, more than any one in the world, even more than your mother, and more, too, than you know about yourself. Can't you see I do? Don't you understand yet? [*ANNA turns away to the window. Voices are heard below in the courtyard. The phonograph stops.* KARL suddenly bursts into gaiety.] I have exactly twenty-seven pfennig.

ANNA

You could sleep there tonight [*points to the sofa*] if you have no place to go. . . . [*She takes a pillow and sheet from her bed and places it on sofa.*]

KARL

So you've paid for everything. Well then, we can go right ahead. Everything's going to be fine, now, Anna, and much nicer than it was. Much nicer. Look at me . . . Please look at me, Anna.

ANNA

[*Suddenly pugnacious.*] Do you know too, what I said when I heard of my husband's death?

KARL

[*Sits down on the sofa, slow and heavy.*] I don't know what you said. It was hard for you, just like for other women. . . . It hurts here, doesn't it? [*Pointing to his heart.*] And yet, you couldn't believe that such a thing could happen to you or to any one. You believed it, but just the same, you thought that I'd walk in some day. That's why you were calm. That's the way you are. Strong and calm, like life itself. [ANNA *listens and looks surprised as if he were exactly describing her feelings, sits down slowly in the chair by the table, without taking her eyes off* KARL.] But after the first calm, you had to go on living always for nothing, always wanting something. I know about that. . . . I've been doing that since I've been a kid. Longing for somebody simple, some one waiting for you, at home. And you? Didn't you want that, too? [ANNA's *head drops onto her folded arms. Her body shakes with irrepressible sobs.* KARL *rises, goes to ANNA, bends over her, strokes her hair*

tenderly.] You'll have to get used to things again.
. . . You'll have to get used to things, Anna.

[ANNA's *body grows calm under his tender soothing. She slowly raises her head. Her face, quiet at first, grows tense.*]

ANNA

I suppose you know what I lived through as a young girl, before I married, and as a child? [*Angry.*] Even before I was born!

KARL

No, I don't know, but I know the kind of child you were. . . . Not always laughing like some children, but not sad, either. You didn't get fidgety when your mother braided your hair. You could wait. You were happy without thinking about it. [ANNA *listens and looks at him full of warm emotion as if for the first time in her life, she saw and felt her own childhood.*] I think you grew like an apple that just keeps growing.

ANNA

[*Deeply moved.*] The things you say. The things you say.

KARL

You're . . . you are in me, every bit of you. I can't explain . . . every drop of blood in me knows what you're like. When you were a little girl . . . this is the way it must have been . . . when you were a little girl coming home with your school-bag over your shoulder, I can see you pushing open the house door and looking down the street at the same time.

ANNA

Yes, that's so. How did you know?

KARL

Why don't you call me Richard? [ANNA *arranges the plate with the sausage on the table for KARL, shoves it a little nearer.* KARL *reaches for her hand.*] Your hands are a little thinner than they were. [Plays with ANNA's fingers, pushes back her sleeve.] And skin so white. Like a fine lady. [He slowly kisses her arm, her neck, her hair, then pulls her up to him.]

ANNA

[*Embarrassed and excited.*] Don't! Don't! Eat something, you better eat. [KARL *catching the warm tone of her words, puts his arms around her.*

ANNA, *in complete surrender, abandons her mouth to him. She whispers after the long kiss.*] Richard.

KARL

[*Tears her madly to him. After the kiss.*] The child! Do you want it, now! Do you want one, now?

ANNA

[*Abandons her mouth to him. Swooning.*] Richard!

[KARL *tears her to him.*]

CURTAIN

Act Three

ACT THREE

SCENE: *Same as Act Two. The stage is empty. The oven is glowing. Next to the little stove is a box with coal and wood.*

KARL *enters in a winter coat, disturbed, looks about him like a thief, hangs up the little blue enamelled dinner pail he takes to work over the tray, creeps toward the bureau, listening for outside noises, takes out a letter hidden there, tiptoes to the table, sits down and begins to read. He still has on his hat and coat. He reads the four pages of the letter through, involuntarily repeating the last lines aloud.*

KARL

But maybe I'll get to you before my letter comes. Richard. [*Looks down, rigid with dread and fright. Repeats.*] Richard. [*Recommences the letter from the beginning.*] Dear Anna. [*Reads a few lines silently.*] I am on a ship. Just yesterday the other ship hit a mine. There were just two ex-

plosions and it was all over. [*Reads a few more lines silently.*] We'd never have seen each other again if I'd been on the other ship. Today we're sailing on. Still through mines. [*He stares before him for a long time, mouth agape, lost in imagination. Light steps approach. KARL listens, full of fear, sticks the letter into his pocket. A knock.*]

[*MARIE enters with a cup of milk in her hand.*]

MARIE

Good evening, Mr. Richard. I managed to find half a pint of milk for Anna. [*Sad.*] But some of it boiled away.

KARL

[*Visibly thinking of nothing but RICHARD's letter.*] Milk's what she needs.

MARIE

She ought to drink a quart every day. But how are you to get it?

KARL

[*Rigid.*] Maybe it'll all be over soon. All over.

MARIE

Why? Don't begin worrying. It's months yet. Anna's all right. The midwife says, "everything's

fine." This morning when Anna was there she said to her, "I've seen so many. God, what misery. But you, Mrs. Anna, you look like a picture. . . ." You're lucky anyhow. The war will be over soon now and then there'll be lots of everything.

KARL

[*Absent-minded.*] Milk's what she needs.

[*A quarrel breaks out across the airshaft.*]

MAN

I'll kill you. Do you hear me? You slut! If I find him I'll kill him too. [WOMAN *cries.*] Shut up, I tell you!

MARIE

[*Horried.*] There, he's beating her again. Her man came back from prison camp yesterday. She had something to do with another man. [*A door is slammed far off. The bellowing is muffled.*] That locksmith in Querstrasse—I read in the paper he just shot down his wife and the other man. With an army-pistol. And they acquitted him. Lots of families will go on fighting when the war is over.

[*A knock.*]

SISTER

[*Enters with a little plate in her hand.*] Could you loan me a spoonful of flour, Mr. Richard?

KARL

[*Completely absorbed.*] Flour?

MARIE

I'll give it to you. May I? [*Goes to kitchen closet with her sister.*]

SISTER

Yesterday I almost got an egg for the little girl downstairs at the grocer's. But it was sold. It was spoken for.

MARIE

[*Pours a little flour out of a bag onto the plate. Encouraging.*] We'll have eggs, too, soon.

[*KARL seats himself at the table with his back to the two women, stares and listens as if he might hear something horrible at any moment.*]

SISTER

Eggs? I don't believe it. . . . But today I was in the swell part of town and I stopped in front of a store window. What do you think I saw?

MARIE

Well?

SISTER

An orange!

MARIE

[*Much surprised to know there are such things again.*] An orange? What did I tell you, Richard? It's going to be over soon.

SISTER

Just one. I went into the store. They just looked at me. Because I didn't belong there. And I asked. I only asked them what it cost. The orange isn't for sale, it can't be sold, the young lady said.

MARIE

Maybe it was wood!

SISTER

No, it was real. You could see by the color. [*She goes to the door accompanied by MARIE.*] I think it'll be a long time before any of us eat an orange. I can't see myself eating one.

MARIE

[*Gay.*] No, I don't suppose you can.

SISTER

You oughtn't to think that far ahead. Thank you, Mr. Richard. [*Off.*]

MARIE

It's five months now, and how brave she's been. She went right on working. A few days later she found out my brother-in-law was killed the day after he got back. The postcard from the army didn't come till today though. He volunteered for patrol duty and he fell, it says on the card. You know what that means—don't you?

KARL

What do you think, Marie, what do you think'll happen when he comes back?

MARIE

How can he, he's dead. We're sure of it now.

KARL

When Richard comes back.

MARIE

[*Doesn't understand.*] Richard?

KARL

For Anna! But she doesn't know yet. Anna doesn't know yet.

MARIE

[*Circles about KARL, looks at him inquiringly.*]
He's alive? Richard's alive! He's coming! Well
what are we going to do?

KARL

Makes no difference if he comes or not.

MARIE

But he loves Anna. He loves her. Oh, you don't
know how much.

KARL

I know. . . . But there's somebody coming who
doesn't exist at all, who isn't Anna's husband, at
all. I tell you he doesn't exist. But—but maybe he
does for Anna. For Anna. What will she do?

MARIE

He's alive. Richard's alive. I knew it from the
beginning, I knew you weren't Richard. It made
me think of a story I once read. [*She sits next*
KARL.]

A prince fell on the field of battle. It was a dark
night and his best friend put on his clothes and
took his papers, and went back, and told every-

body he was the young Princess's husband. Everybody believed him too. Only he couldn't cheat the real Prince's favorite dog.

KARL

[*Simply.*] We were prisoners together.

MARIE

He's coming. He writes he's coming, doesn't he? He's alive.

KARL

No one knows if he's still alive. He wrote this letter months ago. It took all that time to get here. It came yesterday. But even if he's dead and doesn't come I've got to give her the letter. I can't go on like this, not knowing if she'd love me just the same as before. I tell you I couldn't live if she thought we were like all the rest.

MARIE

But Anna believed it, she called you Richard. As if it were all one, her past with Richard and her present with . . . well, with you. Just because Anna loves you. She's been so happy since you've been here.

KARL

But how? Do you understand, Marie, that I

have to give her the letter, even if Richard never comes back again?

MARIE

But—

KARL

I can't cheat her. It isn't like that with us. I must know if she cares no matter what—that it was only me she always wanted. . . . Can you understand that?

MARIE

[*Sadly.*] Maybe I don't understand, but they used to be so happy together.

KARL

[*Completely held by his truth.*] That wasn't my Anna, the Anna that lived with that other man. Anna belonged to me, only to me, from the start.

MARIE

But I . . .

KARL

Anna waited years and years for me. Anna and I—have just begun to live. See what I mean? I'll give her the letter. . . . I can always die, that's nothing—that's easy. But the doubt, that Anna . . . that she was simply . . . like all the other

women around here . . . that's going to be the same rotten thing over again: that maybe it just happened because that was the easiest thing for her to do. If that's so I won't go on living. I'll end it today.

MARIE

Maybe he won't come back after all.

KARL

That doesn't make any difference. You don't understand me yet.

MARIE

Yes—I think I know what you mean.

[*Noise at the door. Something is being set down. The door opens. KARL and MARIE look toward it breathlessly.*]

ANNA

[*A heaping coal-pail in one hand, in the other a shopping bag filled with potatoes, enters, released and lovely, as only some women are radiant when with child. In quiet, sure happiness.*] Here already, Richard?

KARL

[*Horried, in spite of his anguish, because ANNA is lifting heavy things. Stuttering.*] Anna . . .

what are you doing! [*Jumps up, takes everything from her. Pleading.*] Anna, honest, Anna, you mustn't do that any more. Don't do it any more.

ANNA

[*Smiles quietly at KARL.*] That won't hurt me, Richard, not now. [*She kisses KARL warmly and tenderly.*]

KARL

[*Again seized by his great excitement and tense fear.*] It might hurt you.

ANNA

[*To MARIE, who is about to go.*] If you don't have to work tonight I'll come up to you for a bit before supper. All right?

MARIE

[*In suppressed fear and excitement, not knowing what to do.*] I brought a half a pint of milk for you.

ANNA

Did you?

MARIE

But some of it boiled away.

ANNA

You spoil me as if I were a baby, and he . . .
[*Smiling happily.*] He doesn't even want to allow me to take a broom in my hand. Yesterday he scrubbed the floor himself. He doesn't have to do all that.

MARIE

[*In suppressed fear.*] But you'll really come up to me, Anna, won't you? Promise?

ANNA

Of course.

MARIE

Otherwise I could come down. . . . Then . . .
[*Chokes.*] Well, don't forget. [*Off with a look of fright.*]

ANNA

Whatever's the matter with her today! [*Goes to gas ring.*] I was at the cobbler's, and he says your shoes will be as good as new, Richard.

KARL

[*In repressed excitement, more to himself.*] You said that just as if you meant to say "I love you, only you."

ANNA

[*Secure in her happiness, tenderly.*] I always mean that, Richard, no matter what I say—always. And I say it a hundred times a day. Even when you aren't here. [*With a little laugh.*] Even when I'm washing the dishes.

KARL

Anna!

ANNA

You know Richard, I don't think I was ever alive before.

KARL

[*Sits slowly at the table. Without any particular inflection, like a man who is bound to say what he must at all cost.*] You got a letter, Anna.

ANNA

[*Busy over the gas ring, calm.*] A letter, me? I haven't had one for years. Who'd write me?

KARL

[*Pulls the letter out of his pocket.*] Richard.

ANNA

[*Stands with her back to KARL, stops working for a moment, doesn't allow what she has just heard*

to penetrate her mind. In a changed voice, loudly, as if to drown out his words.] How lovely it will be when our child is here, Richard! Our child!

KARL

It came yesterday. I read the letter, Anna, I read it.

ANNA

[Shakes her head and shoulders as if shaking something off, cries loudly, pleadingly, unconscious of what she is saying.] You shouldn't have read it. Burn it. *[Wheels toward him, in tremendous fear.]* What? What's that? What are you saying?

KARL

A letter. Now you've got to read it too.

ANNA

[Stares, as if awaiting the death-blow.] Who wrote? *[KARL meets her look silently.]* Who?

KARL

He.

ANNA

[Wildly.] And you? Good God, and you?

KARL

I must tell you everything.

ANNA

It's coming from far away. . . . Coming at me and I can't get out of the way. [*Bravely, calm in the face of destiny.*] Well, go on, tell me.

KARL

Richard told me about you, Anna. [*Chokes.*]

ANNA

Go on . . . go on . . . everything.

KARL

I didn't lie to you, Anna, I didn't cheat you.

ANNA

I know. I never believed that. [*Rushes to him calling.*] Richard! [*Clutches him.*] This is something I've got to work out. With my head. . . . Go on, from the very beginning—well? [*She sits in near collapse next him.*]

KARL

We were taken prisoner together, way back in September, 'Fourteen. On the fourth.

ANNA

And all we've got to show is a postal from headquarters.

KARL

In winter we were in camp and in summer on the steppe. We were clearing out a ditch. Three summers working on that same ditch. Nobody there. Just the sky and the steppe and us two. . . . And you, Anna, and you. He talked about you. Three years. Always about you. He was . . . he longed for you, Anna, Richard did. [*Dropping all defence.*] He was sick with longing out there. And me, he told me everything about you, Anna, me. . . . But that wasn't it. That wasn't it. It was because it was about you he was telling me—not another woman . . . you, Anna, you! You were part of me, right in me from the beginning. At first he didn't notice. But even later when maybe he did notice he couldn't stop. He had to talk about you. He had to. Because he wanted you so much.

ANNA

[*Her face wet with tears.*] And he was always so quiet.

KARL

[*Sits down next to ANNA on the sofa.*] He told me everything about you! [*In excitement he can barely suppress, whispering.*] Even the way you lie, Anna, the way you lie. And everything else. Everything, Anna, to me. [*ANNA involuntarily lays her fingertips softly on KARL's thigh.*] That's how it got him—thinking of you. That too. Three years! He's a man. . . . And then that mess at camp in winter. Lots of them took their own lives. But we, we two, we held on to you hard. Me too. . . . Anna, there was nothing but you for me either, by then. I talked about you, and he'd listen. I talked about your dresses, about everything, about how your dress fell from your hip. That was my one happiness. The more I talked about you the more it hurt, but that was the only time I was happy. It got me from the beginning. I couldn't help it. I could have killed myself. That would have been easy. But I couldn't go on the old way. . . . Anna, do you still care for me? [*ANNA is silent, cries silently.*] Now you know everything, but there's such a lot more I could tell you. [*Hands her the letter.*]

ANNA

[*Crying.*] You read it. [KARL *shyly holds out the letter again. She shakes her head.*] Read it.

KARL

[*Reads aloud.*] June 30, 1918. On a boat. . . . Dear Anna, I am on a boat. I don't know whether I'm supposed to be an English prisoner or a Japanese one, but anyway I'm on a ship stuck in the bunkers and sweating. Just yesterday the other ship hit a mine, there were just two explosions and it was all over. You couldn't see a thing. But it stunk for hours. We'd never have seen each other again if I'd been on the other ship. Today we're sailing on, still through mines.

[ANNA *moves*. KARL *also raises his head. They look at each other for a long time overcoming the desire for RICHARD'S death in pantomimed exchange.*]

ANNA

It's wrong to think that. We mustn't. Not that. Go on reading, Richard! . . . What is your name?

KARL

Karl.

ANNA

[*Repeats unemphatically.*] Karl, Karl. . . . Go on reading, Karl.

KARL

Still through mines. Nobody knows where we're sailing. I'll give this letter to the Dutchman because they'll let him go. If you get it I would inform you that I still love you the way I used to—or as I might say even more than I used to and I'd like to be with you again after all this time back in our room. But the food is good and there's lots of it. Maybe I'll be with you before this letter comes. Letters take a long time these days. Your Richard.

[*For a time both sit silent and motionless.*]

ANNA

[*Without moving.*] I can't go on living if he won't let me go. There'd be only one thing left then.

KARL

Death, yes. If it has to be. But he . . . no.

ANNA

And we're not to blame, are we? [*Puts her head close to KARL's. They press cheek to cheek.*] All we can do is wait, till he comes. And then tell him

everything. Tell him right away. I won't wait. Let him kill me then. There isn't anybody but you now. [*Takes KARL's hand and lays it on her stomach.*] It's moving. [*They sit cheek to cheek for a while, kissing gently with the corners of their mouths.*] This happiness is so great. You have to pay for it. Very great.

[*The man in the neighboring house suddenly bursts into bellowing.*]

MAN

You god-damned whore!

WOMAN

Don't! Don't!

[*The shrill woman's voice screams. The double noise breaks off. Only a miserable child's whimper is still audible. KARL and ANNA move their cheeks away from each other, sit listening, motionless.*]

ANNA

He's beating her in front of the child. In front of the child. [*Tenderly, dreamily.*] Mr. Hauser is different that way. Yesterday I saw the two men in the street. They were just talking quietly about potatoes, yellow potatoes and white. Which are

best. The three of them are still living in that room. I don't see how they can do it. [*Rises, takes a white cloth out of the closet and spreads it on the table.*]

KARL

Oh, a cloth today.

ANNA

Yes a cloth today.

KARL

[*Goes to the gas ring, takes an empty milk-bottle.*] I'll see if I can find some milk for you.

ANNA

[*Setting the table.*] I don't think you'll be able to get it. There isn't any.

KARL

[*Happy.*] You've got to have milk.

ANNA

Have you any money?

[*MARIE enters hesitantly, questioning fearfully and mutely.*]

KARL

I still have my lunch money.

ANNA

So, you didn't eat again. You mustn't do that. When you work so hard you have to eat. You must eat . . . Karl.

[KARL *smiles happily and sheepishly like a boy who's been caught in a kind act, and squirms out. He goes out.*]

MARIE

[*Looks after KARL, looks questioningly at ANNA, quickly, happily.*] Did he tell you everything? That Richard's coming back?

ANNA

[*Over MARIE's head. Hysterical.*] Yes—Richard is coming back. My husband's coming back! [*Calmly, walks over to MARIE.*] Now we can go up to your place for a bit. [*They go.*]

[*The scratching screech of a gramophone that breaks off, starts again. A man's limping tread outside, heavy, as if two men were dragging a burden up the stairs. A knock. Another knock after an interval. The door opens.*]

[RICHARD, *tremendously unkempt, in a long*

dirty military coat, a stiff crust of dirt that reaches to his ankles, enters, stops in the door, looks about his room, lays his coat carefully over the chair by the door on which KARL previously laid his bundle, looks beamingly around him again, takes up the coat by the collar, not knowing where to put it in the immaculate room, lays it carefully back over the chair, looks around again, limps slightly around the room like a man who is home again after a long Odyssey, and finds everything unchanged. A remarkable gaiety flutters about this heavy man like a butterfly about an elephant. Thus he surveys the nicely laid table, turns his head and trunk without moving his feet and looks at the flower-decked window-sill, the sofa, the bed. The phonograph stops. He suddenly begins looking for something. Starts. Goes to his coat, takes out a little package from the inside pocket, a piece of chocolate in tinfoil further wrapped in tissue paper and tied with thread. He looks at it as if it were an extraordinary delicacy, smells it, unwraps it, and lays it on the table, moves it into a little better position, full of joy at the surprise he has in store for ANNA. Looks cosily about him, goes to the bureau, pulls out

one drawer for the joy of it, then another, closes them both. ANNA enters quietly, freezes at the sight of RICHARD.

RICHARD

[Looks at her, radiant, silent for a moment.]
Well, Anna, don't you know me?

ANNA

[Toneless.] I wouldn't have . . . on the street I wouldn't have known you.

RICHARD

[Good-natured.] That's because it's almost five years, and the beard. *[Goes toward her, holding out his hand. She lays her hand in his grudgingly without taking her eyes from his face.]* Your hand's like ice, did I frighten you? *[Brings his unsightly mop of hair in which his mouth is concealed close to her face to kiss her, with incomparable assurance. ANNA involuntarily moves her head.]* Am I too dirty? Well, that trip—what a trip that was! Six weeks on the train. . . . But that's all over now. *[Looks around him.]* It's wonderful here with you, and neat as a pin too. . . . You painted the chairs again. . . . And the table's set too. So you got my telegram then, didn't you? What luck!

ANNA

I didn't get any telegram.

RICHARD

But look how nice you've got the table! Well, Anna, old girl, you waited a long time—it took a long time, and now you're surprised after all.

ANNA

[*Lets her arms sink limply. The mouth speaks automatically.*] I must tell you something.

RICHARD

What, Anna?

ANNA

Even if the postal telling me you were dead hadn't come . . . I . . . I . . .

RICHARD

Me dead? . . . What are you talking about? . . . When was this?

ANNA

Right at the beginning.

RICHARD

What do you think of that? . . . Poor Anna! You had to go through that too. . . . But it'll be

all right now. Anna, I'm here. The hardest part's over.

[ANNA goes rigid again and goes, eyes wide and unseeing, like the walking dead, out of the door. She is heard running upstairs.]

[RICHARD looks after her open-mouthed and begins to smile as he stands there motionless. Walks to landing, calls her name, then comes back. Looks questioningly down at himself, shakes his head smiling, then looks questioningly at the door again. Hurries to the filthy rags by his knapsack. Shakes his shoulders as if he were cold, puts the coat on again, goes to the little stove, takes the axe out of the coal-box in which cord-wood also lies, shoves the shovel into the coal to stoke the fire.]

[KARL, the filled milk-bottle under his arm, enters. There is a lightning change of emotion from released happiness to icy calm and preparedness for battle.]

RICHARD

[Taken aback.] You? Karl! . . . To think I'd be seeing you again. And so soon! Well, this is great. . . . I just got here a few minutes ago, see. . . . [Shakes KARL heartily by the hand.] I'll

have to tell you all about it. If it wasn't for you I'd never be here. I'd have been rotting long ago. . . . Well, I wake up out of my faint and they don't touch a hair of my hide. At first I couldn't get the lay of that at all.

KARL

[*Absently.*] That's because he thought I wanted to kill him.

RICHARD

Yeah, that's the way I worked it out. Just like that. But to think of you keeping still. You doing all that for me. With death staring you in the face. Karl, I'll never be able to pay you off for that. [KARL *stares at the floor obliquely, shakes his head defensively, guiltily.*] The way we worried about you. Nobody thought you'd get away. I didn't think you had—till now. What a hell of a surprise! That guard, you know—Karl, the Russian guard you gave tobacco to, he shot into the air twice. It got back to us later.

KARL

[*Absently. Casually.*] I thought he would.

RICHARD

Otherwise you'd have been done for. . . . To

think you did that for me! . . . Come, sit down. [*Lays his hand on KARL's shoulder, indicates a chair with the other hand. KARL goes undecidedly to the chair.*] Why don't you sit by the stove, where it's warm. [*KARL, still in his coat, sits down on the sofa like a guest, having first put the bottle of milk on the table. During the following KARL obviously tries again and again to tell RICHARD everything and can't because RICHARD acts so entirely like a man entertaining a guest in his own living-room. At first RICHARD, in the fullness of his joy, doesn't wait for answers.*] Live around here? Oh, you do. You can get food, eh? When did you get back? Anna'll be here any minute. Then she'll give us something to eat. It's all ready. [*Quite confident and at home with things and places, he goes unhesitatingly to the bureau and lays away his wallet and papers. KARL looks at him wide-eyed, tries to speak.*] Go on, make yourself at home. Take off your coat. Well, well, so you're alive. You got away. Go on, take it off. [*KARL takes the coat off, sits down again. RICHARD goes to his knap-sack.*] Anna'll have to wash all of this right away. It'll need a good boiling. With soda! [*Throws a few*

shovelfuls of coal into the little stove.] We were cold long enough, weren't we? It's cold out . . . piles of snow! Almost like Russia. Yes, just look around my place. Was I lying? Grand, isn't it? See, that's what I've come back to. Anna's like that. This'll make up for everything. For all that muck! [*Indicates the table.*] She just needs to lay a plate for you. She just went upstairs for a minute, I think.

KARL

[*Frightened, immediately controls himself.*]
You've seen Anna already?

RICHARD

Just now. I guess she's gone up for something.

KARL

What did she say to you?

RICHARD

She was a little scared at first, seeing me so sudden. But who wouldn't be? On the street she'd never have known me, she said . . . on account of the beard. You know you told me then that she wouldn't know me right off when I came back some day with a beard. [*Steps approach in the*

ball.] Here she is now. [KARL *without looking toward the door shakes his head to himself.*] Now you're really going to see her.

MARIE

[*Short knock, and enters immediately.*] Where's Anna? [Sees RICHARD, *in overwhelming joy which is stronger than her fright.*] Oh, you're back! RICHARD! Back again!

RICHARD

[*To KARL.*] Why, she knew me right off, and I did her too. [*Calming.*] There, there, there! . . . And we thought you was Anna. . . . She was here before, here, and she went out again. Like . . . well, like a lunatic. She didn't get my telegram . . . the surprise was too much for her.

KARL

[*Abruptly. Seized with fear for ANNA, rises.*] Where is Anna?

RICHARD

[*Calmly smiling.*] She'll be right back.

MARIE

[*To KARL who starts to go. Distraught.*] I'll look. I'll look for her.

RICHARD

Well, Marie, how have you been getting along? Tell me.

MARIE

Oh, we just waited from day to day for it to be over.

RICHARD

Then you did just what we did, waited and sweated blood. And now we're here. Well, are you married?

MARIE

[*Smiles with trembling lips.*] No. . . .

RICHARD

Well, what's the matter then? [*With a wink to KARL.*] Maybe it's because you had your pretty hair cut off. But otherwise you look just the same as before. Just like you did that day on the picnic. [*Chuckles.*] Remember? You know, Karl, that day . . .

MARIE

[*Flickering between love and fear.*] I guess I better look for Anna now.

KARL

Where is she?

MARIE

I didn't see her on the street. I guess she must be upstairs with my sister. [*Goes.*]

[*During RICHARD's next sentence KARL watches the door in deathly fear for ANNA, and hardly bears what the other man says.*]

RICHARD

[*Mumbling—scratching his head.*] Why does everybody . . . We used to have picnics together now and then and dance. . . . Yeah, I used to dance. Seems funny now, doesn't it? Her hair always used to come undone when she danced, that's why I noticed right off that it was cut short. It was Sunday, you know, when I asked Anna to be my wife. . . . But I told you all that. What didn't I tell you? [*Seized by the memory of his great longing.*] Those years were hard, too hard—hell. But that's all over now. You live around here, don't you? Then maybe you know Anna.

KARL

[*Makes a gesture, bent on saying everything.*]

I've always known Anna. I knew her five years ago.

RICHARD

Sure, sure, you were always telling me that. But I mean really, really? . . . Got a job?

KARL

With Grieb and Stein.

RICHARD

They make rubber heels. I was with 'em before the war. I'm through with them.

KARL

[*Caught again by the illusion that he is* RICHARD.] At first I wasn't going back myself.

RICHARD

Did you work for Grieb and Stein before? You weren't here before the war?

KARL

[*Moves his head questioningly right and left, as if waking again.*] That's right, I wasn't.

RICHARD

Then I don't understand you. [*Takes the piece of chocolate from the table and shows it to* KARL.]

He involuntarily speaks mysteriously. He calls KARL to him in a mysterious voice—KARL comes as if to disaster. Then RICHARD turns with smile and chocolate.] Karl! A surprise for Anna. I bet you couldn't find another piece. Chocolate! A Dutchman gave me this. Six months ago. But I saved it. For Anna. Won't she be surprised? [*He pushes him in great happiness. KARL stumbles away.*] It's pretty scarce, this is. All I've done is sniff it. Hey, Karl, listen! [*He turns on gas.*] Remember?

[*Steps approach.*]

KARL

This is Anna, now.

ANNA

[*Wet with sweat, eyes wide and unseeing, hair tumbled over her forehead, totters in.*] Is he here? [*Whistle stops. Looks, sees RICHARD, rushes into KARL's arms.*]

RICHARD

[*Frightened but still unsuspecting.*] What's the matter? Are you sick?

KARL

[*Resolved, as if deliberately firing at RICHARD.*]
You must let Anna go.

[*ANNA frees herself from KARL with the last of her strength, leans against the wall staring madly before her.*]

RICHARD

[*Takes a long time to grasp it, looks slowly from one to the other.*] What is this—what does this mean?

KARL

You must let her go.

RICHARD

[*To ANNA.*] What's he saying? [*ANNA doesn't move. RICHARD says slowly.*] What do you mean by that? . . . Did you? . . . If you've . . . even once, I'll kill the two of you. [*Then to KARL.*] I'll kill you—you . . .

KARL

Go ahead.

RICHARD

[*To ANNA.*] The way he talks. Me, let you go!

Yeah, I see myself. Well, say something, Anna. What's the matter, Anna. [*Makes for her.*]

KARL

[*Steps between them.*] Anna is my wife.

RICHARD

What? . . . What are you saying? . . . Your wife?

KARL

She's mine—*mine*—do you understand?

RICHARD

Anna! [*Looks at ANNA, who has risen, holding her hands over her stomach.*] Why you're— Oh, that's the way it is? [*To KARL, dangerously quiet.*] I understand enough, now—you . . . [*To KARL, as if excusing ANNA and blaming only KARL.*] He didn't have you more than once, did he? And now— That's what you wanted me to understand, huh? . . .

ANNA

No, it isn't like that—not like that.

RICHARD

Well, we'll have to manage about the child. That'll be all right, Anna—never mind that—

everything is going to be all right. [*Then to KARL.*] But as for you—I'll—I'll— [*Staggers about in circles, suddenly sees axe by sink—goes toward it, takes it with uncanny calm.*]

ANNA

[*Flies to him.*] Richard?

RICHARD

Wait, Anna, we'll talk later—but now— [*Pushes ANNA aside with irresistible calm, goes toward KARL, clutching the axe near the steel. Raises the axe.*]

[*KARL, deathly pale, does not defend himself.*]

ANNA

[*Rushes to KARL—hangs about his neck as RICHARD raises the axe.*] All right—I can't go on living without him—kill me too. It just happened, that's all.

RICHARD

[*Struck by the knowledge that ANNA loves KARL, cannot strike, lets the axe fall. Lost, falls to the chest in amazed understanding.*] There's no one but him—only him? . . . You don't want me any more?

ANNA

Yes, that's so. I can't help it.

[ANNA *stands motionless, frozen with pain.*
KARL *stares before him.*]

RICHARD

[*Slowly raises his head.*] Can't you? Why not, Anna, why can't you? It was so nice before . . . so nice. Don't you care for any one but him?

ANNA

[*Crying.*] Richard.

RICHARD

[*In stupid brooding.*] What are you crying for?

ANNA

I love you, Richard—but this other thing—I can't explain it—you can kill me, if you want to.

RICHARD

If that's the way you feel—what's the use—

ANNA

That's for you to say. But I can't live without him—him. . . .

RICHARD

[*Trying to stand up.*] Well, then I'll have to . . . I'll have to . . . [*Stares questioningly into*

the air, not knowing what it is he must do, sinks back upon the chest.]

KARL

We'll have to go away now, Anna.

ANNA

The bag is under the bed.

[KARL pulls a little hand-bag out from under the bed. ANNA, with the gruesome assurance of a loving woman who does not dream of yielding to her sympathy for the man she is deserting, and staying with him, goes to the bureau and takes out a few poor little pieces of underwear. KARL starts to cross to sofa to get coat—stops before RICHARD—starts to give him his hand—RICHARD doesn't look up—KARL crosses, gets his coat—joins ANNA at door.]

ANNA

Only what we need most.

KARL

Are you dressed warm underneath? It's cold out.

ANNA

[Unmoved, entirely given to her love.] I'm warm enough.

[*They go into the hall.*]

MARIE

[*Pale with excitement, coming from above, looks at KARL and ANNA.*] But where are you going, Anna?

ANNA

[*In the egoistic joy of her love.*] It doesn't matter.

MARIE

Have you money?

ANNA

[*Smiling at KARL.*] It doesn't matter. [*They go off. RICHARD sunken in despair on the chest at the foot of the bed, MARIE gazing after those who have left. When they have passed down the stairs, MARIE turns gazing blankly at RICHARD.*]

CURTAIN

